Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the two consecutive paragraphs labeled [0008] with the following replacement paragraphs:

[0008] A steer-axle assembly in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention includes at least one sealant compressible shim, an axle segment, a kingpin, and a steering knuckle assembly. According to one embodiment, a sealant compressible shim is disposed around a kingpin in a gap between a steering knuckle assembly and a wheel end axle segment. The steer-axle assembly includes an axle segment having an end with a steering knuckle assembly rotatably mounted thereon. The steering knuckle has at least one receiving portion. The kingpin includes a body segment and at least one interface segment. The body segment is fixedly coupled to the axle segment. The at least one interface segment and the at least one receiving portion of the steering knuckle are provided in a one to one relation so that each kingpin interface segment is received in a corresponding receiving portion of the steering knuckle. At least one sealant compressible shim is located adjacent an interface segment of the kingpin and fills a gap between the axle segment and steering knuckle assembly around the kingpin.

[0008.1] A steer-axle assembly in accordance with the present invention represents a significant improvement as compared to conventional steer-axle assemblies. These and other features and objects of this invention will become apparent to one skilled in the art from the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings illustrating features of this invention by way of example.

Please replace paragraph [0010] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0010] Referring now to the drawings wherein like reference numerals are used to identify identical components in the various

views. Fig 1 illustrates an embodiment of a steer-axle assembly 10 utilizing a sealant compressible shim 12 disposed about a kingpin 14 in a gap 16 between a steering knuckle assembly 18 and an axle segment 20. The steer-axle assembly 10 includes an axle segment 20 having an end with a steering knuckle assembly 18 rotatably mounted thereon. The steering knuckle assembly 18 has at least one receiving portion 22. The kingpin 14 includes a body segment 24 and at least one interface segment 26. The body segment 24 is fixedly coupled to the axle segment 20 by known means. The interface segment 26 of the kingpin 14 and the receiving portion 22 of the steering knuckle assembly 18 are provided in a one to one relation so that each kingpin 14 interface segment 26 is received in a corresponding receiving portion 22 of the steering knuckle assembly 18. At least one sealant compressible shim 12 is located adjacent an interface segment 26 of the kingpin 14 and fills a gap 16 between the axle segment 20 and steering knuckle assembly 18 around the kingpin 14.

Please replace paragraph [0016] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0016] According to one embodiment, the steer-axle assembly 10 for sealing a gap 16 between an axle segment 20 and a steering knuckle assembly 18 includes an axle segment 20 having an outer end, a steering knuckle assembly 18 rotatably coupled to the outer end and having an upper receiving portion 22 and a lower receiving portion 22 , a kingpin 14 having a body segment 24 fixedly coupled to the axle segment 20, and an upper interface segment 26 received within the corresponding upper receiving portion 21, and a lower interface segment 26 received within the corresponding lower receiving portion 22 of the steering knuckle assembly 18. A sealant compressible shim 12 surrounds the kingpin 14 adjacent the upper interface segment 26 of the kingpin 14 and fills a gap 16 between the axle segment 20 and steering knuckle assembly 18 around the kingpin 14. The sealant

compressible shim 12 has a first substantially rigid shim 28 layer disposed about the body segment 24 in contact with the upper receiving portion 22 of the steering knuckle assembly 18, a second substantially rigid shim 30 layer disposed about the body segment 24 in contact with the axle segment 20, and at least one compressible shim layer 32 between the first and second substantially rigid shim 30 layers. The steer-axle assembly 10 may further include a mounting means 42 for rotatably mounting the steering knuckle assembly 18 relative to the axle segment 20. The mounting means 42 may include a bearing 44 assembled in known manner adjacent the lower interface segment 26 of the kingpin 14. The bearing 44 surrounds the body segment 24 and fills the gap between the axle segment 20 and the lower receiving portion 22 of the steering knuckle assembly 18. According to one embodiment, the bearing 44 is a thrust type bearing.